



# 3 Ways These Green Companies Are Promoting Healthy Workplaces and How You Can, Too

Published October 14, 2016

Entrepreneur.com

Mental and physical health are like heads and tails: two sides of the same coin. Whether it's a lunchtime run or our weekly office yoga class, at my cleaning supply company Method, I like to sneak in a workout whenever possible, and I encourage my team and colleagues to do the same.

More than 90 percent of business leaders recognize the importance of wellness to employee productivity. A formalized and measured program is the key to maximum impact, but even small steps toward incorporating wellness into the office will reap rewards.

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As a purpose-driven company, we strive to leave everything we touch better than we found it. Prevention is central to that philosophy, whether it's using recycled and recyclable plastic in our products or prioritizing employee wellness with a lens on their long-term health.

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Companies that adopt progressive wellness policies see real benefits. Software company Mindbody puts health at the core of its employee relations by offering meditation classes and wellness funds, while Honest Tea runs a series of wellness seminars for its employees.

These measures keep companies lean by cutting down healthcare costs. While the average annual healthcare cost increase to businesses is 7 percent, a 2014 Harvard Business Review study found that companies with robust wellness programs saw an increase of only 1 to 2 percent.

And with 84 percent of Millennial consumers making purchase decisions based on a company's engagement with corporate social responsibility, keeping workers happy, motivated and healthy can offer a competitive advantage, too.

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You can't just look at your company and say, "I think we need to promote a healthier environment" and expect it to happen. Before finalizing anything regarding a wellness program, ask this question: What does that policy need to succeed? As you try to answer that query, consider these three crucial components:

### 1. Get them moving

The benefits of exercise aren't new. It boosts energy levels, increases blood flow to the brain, spurs creativity and intensifies the release of endorphins. Not only do active employees take fewer sick days, but they also bring new energy and positivity that can work wonders for recruitment and retention efforts.

Fitbit is one of the industry leaders in activity-based programs. The company has a great internal program, and it's also helping 30 Fortune 500 companies keep costs down and boost employee health. Encouraging these activity-based options at work can lend a hand in helping employees apply them to other aspects of their lives.

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### 2. Provide better fuel

You are what you eat, and your employees are what you serve them to eat. A 2010 study found that offering more healthful workplace food and beverages had a real, positive impact on employee eating behavior and weight loss, and there are obvious ties to healthcare premium costs.

And there's an opportunity to demonstrate company values, too. Encouraging consumption of local and sustainable foods should start in the canteen, something Kaiser Permanente already understands. It offers healthful checkout options, doesn't carry sugar-sweetened beverages and spends 18 percent of its annual food expenses on sustainable products.

Nine years ago, Timberland got proactive in making its Statham, N.H., headquarters environmentally friendly. The company revamped the landscape surrounding its building, swapping out invasive, environmentally harmful species for tolerant perennials, native species and low-maintenance, pesticide-free fruit trees.

The fully grown fruits and herbs from these trees are either sold to employees or used in the company cafe. Presenting employees with healthy eating choices at work shows forethought and gives them the chance to carry those habits outside the office.

### 3. Get the mind right

With stress costing American companies between \$200 and \$300 billion every year, businesses need to find ways to keep employees off edge. Mindfulness programs are a great place to start.

Workers engaging with these programs report greater happiness and productivity, and company healthcare costs fall, too. My company provides instructor-led yoga classes every week and teaches employees proper breathing techniques to help center ourselves in day-to-day situations. Mindfulness activities like these help prevent stress before it can take over and derail our productivity and satisfaction.

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Don't leave employees to struggle with wellness on their own. Follow the lead of forward-thinking green companies and take steps to introduce programs based on mindfulness, healthy eating and physical fitness. Costs will fall, productivity will rise and consumers will take note.

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